

# **IMPACT STATEMENT SPLITTING THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY INTO TWO DISTRICTS: CLERK'S OFFICE IMPLICATIONS**

## **Introduction**

Bills HR. 409 and S. 273 propose to split the District of New Jersey into the Southern District of New Jersey and the Northern District of New Jersey. The Southern District would consist of the following counties: Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Burlington, Gloucester, Mercer, Ocean, Atlantic, Monmouth, Hunterdon, Salem, Somerset, and Warren. The other eight counties would be included within the jurisdiction of the Northern District.

If these Bills become law, there is a 180 day grace period before the two Districts would be officially recognized. During this 6 months, the Clerk's Offices in each district would need to make various administrative and operational adjustments in order to function and to support their respective judicial officers. Some of the issues are as follows:

### **1. Administrative Impact:**

There are certain administrative functions that currently provide service to the District of New Jersey. These are finance, human resources, training, automation, procurement and budget. All of these services are located in Trenton. With two districts, these services would effectively be in place for the Southern District. They would have to be established for the Northern District.

A. Finance: All of the financial transactions for all of the Court Units in the District of New Jersey are processed by the finance department. The Chief Financial Deputy, together with four assistant financial deputies, live within the Trenton Area. Combined, this entire staff has close to 75 years of experience. Their scope of responsibilities include issuing checks for goods and services and for jurors, overseeing the registry, processing vouchers and entering information into the court financial system.

Staffing the new finance department in the Northern District would require some effort. Some of the existing staff would remain in Trenton to handle the financial duties for the Southern District. Others would have to be transferred to the Northern District. If they declined, then new staff would have to be recruited and trained.

B. Automation: The District of New Jersey operates many centrally-supported systems out of the Trenton office. These systems include: docketing, finance, jury, and CHASER/PACER. Most of these systems are at least ten years old and they were developed with a data base management system that is obsolete. We have two people located in Trenton who have worked with these systems over the years and even participated in the original training

that was offered in the late 80's. We depend on them because they have the necessary skills to support and modify these systems.

By splitting the District, a new Automation Department would have to be created for the Northern District and these systems would have to be installed in Newark. Once again, one of the existing staff members would remain in Trenton. The other would have to be transferred to Newark. If the transfer was declined, then someone with the necessary skills to administer and support these systems would need to be recruited.

C. Human Resources: The existing Human Resources Department is located in Trenton. It consists of a Human Resource Manager, a Benefits Specialist and an Administrative Assistant. The members of this department travel throughout the District handling human resources matters. This department would have to be created for the Northern District of New Jersey.

D. Training: The current Training Specialist, whose current duty station is Trenton, coordinates training for the entire District. Assuming the Training Specialist remains in Trenton, this position would need to be created in the Northern District.

E. Procurement: Most of the bidding, invoice processing, purchase order preparation and delivery coordination activities are conducted in Trenton. A new procurement department would have to be created for the Northern District. This would necessitate recruiting and hiring someone with the necessary bookkeeping and automation skills. Knowing and mastering AO and federal procurement regulations are critical in this position. Accomplishing this would take a rigorous training effort.

Creating a Procurement Department for the Northern District should be accomplished quickly since new accounts need to be established, new letterhead and envelopes need to be ordered for all chambers and the Clerk's Office, and new seals need to be made. These same activities will need to be performed by the Procurement Department in the Southern District.

F. Budget: The District of New Jersey has one Budget Officer who travels the District performing other duties including conducting unannounced audits, preparing regular budget reports for the AO and assisting with the development of the annual Spending Plan.

A Budget Officer position would need to be created for the Northern District.

## 2. Operations Impact:

A. Criminal Numbers: The assignment of criminal cases and criminal numbers is centralized in Newark. This activity would have to be created in the Southern District.

B. Resource Sharing: The three offices share staff resources to assist with training and to

handle work. For example, the Newark office currently has two vacancies and one of these is a Case Opener position. To keep pace with the new cases in Newark, Trenton staff are opening cases filed in Newark. With two new Districts, Camden and Trenton will be able to help one another. Newark will be on its own.

C. Court Reporters and Court Interpreters: All of the scheduling activities associated with court reporters and court interpreters are performed in Newark. A position would need to be created in the Southern District to handle these responsibilities. A Court Reporter Plan would need to be developed for the Southern District and presented to the Circuit for approval.

The duty station for the Staff Interpreter is Newark. This position was authorized by the AO based on district-wide requests for interpreting services. There may be insufficient justification for the continuation of this position in the Northern District and the creation of a similar position in the Southern District.

D. Jury: We are currently in the process of creating a new master-wheel for the District of New Jersey. This activity, together with the mailing of questionnaires should be completed by June.

The Jury Management System (JMS) is located in Trenton. It is used to create the qualified wheels and the panels for each vicinage. Assuming this system remains in the Southern District, then a new JMS will need to be installed in the Northern District.

Separate Jury Plans will also need to be developed for each District.

E. Local Rules: Each District will have to adopt its own Local Rules and these will have to be published, reviewed and adopted before the effective date of the split.

### 3. Caseload Impact:

Staffing for the Clerk's Office is based on a formula. This includes a number of factors including the number of judicial officers, the number of divisional offices and workload. It is difficult to predict the impact of the split on the staffing formula for each new Clerk's Office. In other words, will all existing staff be absorbed into the two Clerk's Offices? Will there be reductions in force? Will certain positions be protected only if the incumbents are transferred to another district? What we do know is that some of the variables will be different. For example, the new Bills provide 10 judges for the Northern District and 7 judges for the Southern District. The Northern District will have one office. The Southern District will have two divisional offices. Assuming historical caseload data is an acceptable predictor of future filings, then the filings for statistical year '98, '99 and 2000 have been compiled for the two proposed Districts and are attached.

#### 4. Summary:

The major impact of splitting of the District will be in three areas. The first is the successful implementation of critical computer systems in the Northern District. The second is recruiting and training administrative and automation personnel for both Districts. Finding qualified automation staff to support our existing docketing and financial systems will be difficult. The third is handling all of the activities and preparations for splitting the District, without additional staff, and doing so while still supporting the District of New Jersey.

# **CRIMINAL FILINGS - DISTRICT SPLIT - NORTH/SOUTH** **STATISTICAL YEARS**

**3/6/2001**

## **NORTH**

<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
Bergen	56	37	48
Essex	183	195	245
Hudson	67	63	53
Middlesex	52	39	39
Morris	14	11	16
Passaic	57	36	26
Sussex	0	0	2
Union	31	27	33
Unknown	37	49	44
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>506</b>

## **SOUTH**

<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
Atlantic	21	33	26
Burlington	29	23	35
Camden	52	92	95
Cape May	4	12	7
Cumberland	8	9	12
Gloucester	18	19	20
Hunterdon	1	1	3
Mercer	32	33	66
Monmouth	35	44	33
Ocean	22	20	12
Salem	0	3	4
Somerset	7	11	4
Warren	0	2	3
Unknown	7	2	8
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>328</b>
<b>DISTRICT TOTALS</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>761</b>	<b>834</b>

**CIVIL FILINGS - DISTRICT SPLIT - NORTH/SOUTH  
STATISTICAL YEARS**

**3/6/2001**

**NORTH**

<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
Bergen	349	397	499
Essex	767	1052	1266
Hudson	246	279	308
Middlesex	271	419	298
Morris	236	312	316
Passaic	154	177	212
Sussex	45	48	39
Union	228	263	300
Unknown	1029	403	238
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>3,325</b>	<b>3,350</b>	<b>3,476</b>

**SOUTH**

<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
Atlantic	143	176	185
Burlington	171	283	284
Camden	1041	990	868
Cape May	46	62	63
Cumberland	167	129	137
Gloucester	83	125	106
Hunterdon	50	57	70
Mercer	492	497	503
Monmouth	288	266	269
Ocean	196	182	192
Salem	28	28	25
Somerset	142	132	181
Warren	46	38	44
Unknown	71	18	31
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,964</b>	<b>2,983</b>	<b>2,958</b>
<b>DISTRICT TOTALS</b>	<b>6,289</b>	<b>6,333</b>	<b>6,434</b>